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Smithian Sentimentalism Anticipated: Pufendorf on the Desire for Esteem and Moral Conduct

Heikki Haara and Aino Lahdenranta

Abstract

In this paper, we argue that Samuel Pufendorf's works on natural law contain a sentimentalist theory of morality that is Smithian in its moral psychology. Pufendorf's account of how ordinary people make moral judgements and come to act sociably is surprisingly similar to Smith's. Both thinkers maintain that the human desire for esteem, manifested by resentment and gratitude, informs people of the content of central moral norms and can motivate them to act accordingly. Finally, we suggest that given Pufendorf's theory of socially imposed moral entities, he has all the resources for a sentimentalist theory of morality.

Key words: Pufendorf; Smith; passions; esteem; sociability; sentimentalism

Samuel Pufendorf's connection to Adam Smith and other authors of the Scottish Enlightenment has become a subject of growing interest among philosophers and intellectual historians. Smith's explicit references might be few but he was deeply familiar with Pufendorf's works on natural law, which were a staple of law and philosophy curricula in Scottish universities at the time.¹ In recent years, stimulating research has emerged on the affinities between the two thinkers: Knud Haakonssen (2004, 96–97) argues that Hobbes's and Pufendorf's radical view of morality as an artificial and conventionalist phenomenon prepared the way for Hume and Smith. Istvan Hont (2015, 33) maintains that Smith's analysis

of the historical development of socio-political organizations borrowed Pufendorf's presupposition that the self-regarding basis of human motivation and sociability are not diametrically opposed but complementary. Arild Saether (2017) shows how Smith used Pufendorf's ideas in his political economy.

Owing to this welcome trend in scholarship, the similarity between Pufendorf's and Smith's moral psychological views is also gradually being recognized. However, the role of the human desire for esteem in Pufendorf's natural law theory remains unexplored.² The contribution of this article is to bring this desire and its relationship to morality into focus. By 'desire for esteem' we mean a basic emotional need to be positively noticed by others. It is a passion for approval as such, hardwired in human nature. For Pufendorf and Smith alike, we will argue, desire for esteem is reflected in the content of key moral norms and accounts for people's motivation to comply with them. Moreover, we will suggest that Pufendorf has all the resources for building a sentimentalist moral theory around the psychological views he shares with Smith.

Pufendorf's account of how people in practice judge of morals and can come to act accordingly is surprisingly like Smith's. Still, one must not overlook the arguably deep difference between their respective moral theories. Pufendorf is a natural law theorist who aims to demonstrate the content of divinely imposed laws while Smith seeks to describe and explain moral phenomena in naturalistic terms. In his major work *De jure naturae et gentium*, and its textbook version *De officio hominis et civis*, Pufendorf grounds morality in the will of God, who commands everyone to 'cultivate and maintain peaceable sociality (*socialitas*) as much as he can' (JNG 2.3.15/PWSP 152).³ In turn, Smith's moral theory provided in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is sentimentalist in that our emotional responses – from a certain privileged viewpoint – are constitutive of moral qualities (TMS III.5.5).⁴ Moreover, their normative positions differ accordingly in that Smith stresses appropriate motives instead of conforming one's behaviour to a law.

Pufendorf's divine command theory is apt to conceal the more constructive aspects he sees in human nature. However, this paper shows that Pufendorf is far from maintaining that human emotions, or passions, are a mere threat to sociability and hence something to be controlled by law. On the contrary, we argue, Pufendorf agrees with Smith that the desire for esteem 1) provides people with the content of central moral norms 2) and

can move people to act in accordance with moral norms. Pufendorf and Smith are especially attentive to desire for esteem in the form of gratitude and resentment: the reactive attitudes explain how people judge each other's conduct and come to modify their own.

Showing the ways in which desire for esteem is conducive to morality obviously does not by itself establish Pufendorf as a proto-sentimentalist. By sentimentalism, we mean a metaethical view that takes moral qualities to be constituted by human judgements which either are or have their basis in emotional responses. However, our claims gain further relevance when considered against the backdrop of Pufendorf's theory of moral entities. The fundamental moral norms might be comprised of the divinely imposed natural law, but people are capable of imposing further moral entities onto the physical world. These include 'moral sensible qualities', such as honour and disgrace (JNG I.1.21). Indeed, the majority of moral entities are imposed by people themselves. We suggest that when Pufendorf's psychological views concerning moral judgement and motivation are placed within this part of his moral ontology, one finds nothing less than a sentimentalist account of moral phenomena. Given the centrality of reactive attitudes and its understanding of moral motivation, the account foreshadows Smithian sentimentalism in particular as opposed to the other eighteenth-century varieties by Hutcheson and Hume.

The paper unfolds as follows. Section one shows how self-esteem manifests itself in the passions of resentment and gratitude. In Pufendorf, these passions are connected to the perfect duty to grant others simple esteem and to the imperfect duty of charity whereas Smith explicitly accounts for the virtues of justice and beneficence with them. Section two investigates how, in Pufendorf's theory, the desire for esteem can contribute to sociable conduct that is required by the law of nature. Section three, finally, concentrates on the complex relationship between esteem and moral motivation in Smith that bears an interesting resemblance to some less explicit notions at work in Pufendorf's writings. It is of particular interest how Smith develops his account of esteem-seeking further by distinguishing between the desires for praise, merited praise, and praise-worthiness.

1. Resentment and gratitude

Pufendorf's and Smith's emphasis on resentment and gratitude – emotions known as reactive attitudes in contemporary discussions⁵ – brings their moral psychological views particularly close to one another. In what follows, we show that both thinkers see reactive attitudes as essential constituents of social life and analyse them as expressions of the desire for esteem. Moreover, because of the way in which moral norms reflect these attitudes, enabling people's self-esteem turns out to be their main content.

Pufendorf does not articulate a systematic or comprehensive theory of human psychology anywhere. A close examination of his writings reveals, nonetheless, that Pufendorf is attentive to the functioning of resentment and gratitude. He explains that human beings are equipped with 'a very delicate self-esteem' (*sui aestimatio*), that is, they naturally have an emotional need for maintaining a recognized status as human beings in the eyes of others. The term 'man' (*homine*) carries a certain dignity. People therefore naturally respond to insults that deny their humanity by replying: 'I am not a dog or beast, but as much a man as you'. It is noteworthy that, in these instances the human being 'is usually no less, but in fact more upset' than if someone damages his body or property. (JNG 3.2.1/PWSP 159)

Self-esteem tends to animate exacerbated and unsocial reactions. Pufendorf's awareness of the unsocial effects of self-esteem leads to the conviction that despite the dissimilarity of natural capabilities among individuals, every person must avoid displaying pride and must treat others as their natural equals in order to maintain peace. The duty to regard others as naturally equal thus follows from the need to pacify the resentment produced by self-esteem (Saastamoinen 2010, 55–62). Moreover, natural law obliges us to treat others as natural equals and to grant others simple esteem (*existimatio simplex*), that is, to treat others as morally capable actors unless their actions prove otherwise or civil law reduces their simple esteem.⁶ One is obligated to grant simple esteem to strangers even when one does not have proof of their aptitude to cultivate sociability (JNG VIII.4.2).

Stephen Darwall (2012, 224) has argued that Pufendorf's theory 'will face the problem that taking a sociable *attitude* towards others, that is, *regarding* them as having legitimate claims on us owing to a dignity that is grounded in their rational and social "nature," is arguably not the kind of thing that can be done in obedience to anyone else's legitimate demands, not even God's.' According to Darwall, we may treat others sociably only through appreciating their social nature. It should be noted, however, that in Pufendorf's

model the quantity of esteem always hinges on the contextually arising demands of sociability.⁷ It is one of his basic assumptions that the variable amount of moral esteem among persons is necessary for the accomplishment of a tranquil social order in large-scale societies. People cannot demand simple esteem from others owing to the dignity of their own nature. The demand to esteem others as good men, until otherwise proved, is grounded in the will of God that obliges humans to act in a way that is necessary for maintaining a peaceful social life.⁸

Pufendorf's interest in the effects of the desire for esteem is mainly political. The social consequences of self-esteem become a pressing issue because of the number of individuals who are naturally disposed to abuse others. Many individuals are equipped with 'petulance' (*petulantia*), that is, 'a passion for insulting others,' inclining them to insult and harm other people. In turn, others 'cannot fail to be offended and to gird themselves to resist, however restrained their natural temper, in order to preserve and protect their persons and their liberty'. (OHC I.3.4/DMC 34–35) People naturally experience resentment and react with violence to insults lowering their esteem in social life; in Pufendorf's words, the sign of contempt 'vigorously excites the hearts of others to violent anger and desire for revenge'. In fact, many individuals 'would prefer to expose their lives to instant danger, to say nothing of disturbing the public peace, rather than let an insult go unavenged'. (I.7.6/63) As it turns out, self-esteem may even override the natural inclination to self-preservation and the fear of death.

Pufendorf's aim is to argue that the minimal conditions of mutual trust necessary for sociability in large-scale societies would be utterly destroyed without satisfying the need for esteem of its members. He notes that when forbidding duels, the magistrates ought to take care to impose punishments on citizens who disgracefully insult others, or 'to give a cuff on the ear'. This is necessary for the prevention of vengeful acts. Because of the 'custom in civil life', Pufendorf does not consider it realistic to demand that people tame their self-esteem and endure insults that greatly lower their esteem (JNG II.5.12/LNNO 281–282).

Pufendorf focuses more on how to confine the resentful effects of self-esteem than on how the passion of gratitude may promote sociability. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that charitable actions are able to generate feelings of gratitude in a person receiving a benefit that, in turn, nurtures reciprocal sociability. Merely to grant others the esteem to which they

have a perfect right eliminates ‘the just cause for hatred’ whereas ‘something good must also be conferred on the other’ to foster mutual sociability among individuals (JNG III.3.1/PWSP 164). The performance of perfect duties is not in itself enough for a smoothly functioning social life. People should therefore engage in numerous generous actions coming under the heading of imperfect duties. Pufendorf adapts the language of Hugo Grotius in distinguishing between perfect and imperfect duties and correlative rights, and dividing the effects of ‘moral power’ into either perfect or imperfect. Perfect duties (e.g., civil laws and contracts) are always specifically defined and their performance can be compelled by force. In contrast, imperfect rights (e.g., charity) cannot be defended either by legal authority or by means of war. (JNG I.1.19–20)

Although Pufendorf does not explain in detail the psychological process involved in the practices of imperfect duties, his discussion implies that a giver’s emotional attitude towards a beneficiary plays a vital role. Pufendorf’s reflection on charity is marked by references to Seneca’s *De Beneficiis*. Like Seneca, Pufendorf acknowledges the importance of handling gift-giving situations so that the passion of gratitude can promote sociability (Harpman 2004, 26). The importance of imperfect duties lies exactly in their power to promote gratitude. The acts need to have a non-compulsory character ‘since things which may be extorted by force have no such power to win the hearts of others, as those which may be denied without fear’ (JNG III.4.6/LNNO 386). It is important to note that pretended altruism is sufficient for Pufendorf.⁹ He does not claim that the giver must perform the duties of humanity for altruistic reasons. Rather, Pufendorf emphasizes that others have to *perceive* the giver’s action as altruistic (OHC I.8.8/DMC 66–67).

The reason for this is that people experience gratitude and approve beneficent acts only when they take them as signs of benevolence. The person performing a charitable act does not have a perfect right to claim gratitude from the beneficiary. Nonetheless, Pufendorf argues that by failing to show gratitude one ‘reveals oneself as unworthy of the judgement which another man had made of one’s sense of honour; and to let it be seen that one cannot be moved to conceive a sense of humanity by benefits which soften even beasts’ (OHC I.8.8/DMC 66). While the passion of gratitude per se is morally indifferent without the commands of natural law, it forms an important source of motivation for the promotion of sociability.¹⁰

Pufendorf's discussion of perfect duties and imperfect duties makes frequent references to resentment and gratitude. Smith, for his part, grounds the equivalent virtues of justice and beneficence in the self-same passions. Smith's unique account of moral qualities relies on people's sympathetic capacities¹¹ and the stable viewpoint of a spectator (a person uninvolved but attentively observing). Accordingly, an action has merit if its motive would raise gratitude in a spectator who is attending to the situation of the person affected by the action. Beneficence is about performing meritorious acts. Correspondingly, justice is about refraining from acts with demerit, that is, acts that raise the spectator's vicarious resentment. People performing such actions are 'proper' objects of gratitude and resentment in Smith's sense of the term.¹² Since resentment involves a desire to punish, and gratitude a desire to reward, punishment and reward are also appropriate to the extent that a spectator is apt to share these passions.¹³ (TMS II.i.2.1–3)

Smith's way of establishing the rules of justice and the ideal of beneficence by relying on appropriate, passionate responses is the reverse of Pufendorf's divine command model. Instead of somehow referring to the goal of natural law, the maintenance of sociability, Smith derives, for instance, the normative notion of injury from the spectators' sympathy with the victim's natural, harm-based resentment (TMS II.ii.1.5). However, Smith is just as keenly aware of the large-scale effects of resentment and gratitude as Pufendorf is. He points out that beneficence is necessary to make a society flourishing and happy by tying its members together with reciprocal love and gratitude, although a society can subsist in a tolerable state without this virtue. The case of justice is different since the prevalence of injustice would destroy society at once. Smith claims that if the members of society began hurting one another at will, this would lead to 'mutual resentment and animosity' and all the bonds of society would be broken at once. (II.ii.3.3)

In Smith's view then, every state is under the necessity to enforce the virtue of justice through positive laws in order to avoid the 'bloodshed and disorder' that would ensue from every man revenging himself 'whenever he fancied he was injured' (TMS VII.iv.36). However, it is not awareness of this necessity that explains why we disapprove of certain acts as unjust and regard punishing people for these acts as legitimate. This point constitutes Smith's main criticism of Hume's theory of justice (see Pack and Schliesser 2006). Sympathy with the general happiness in a society cannot, Smith maintains, account for the relevant

responses that are actually much less reflective. (II.ii.3.4–9) Besides this, Smith claims that Hume gets the phenomenology wrong: the passions we feel when we or others are intentionally benefited or harmed are different from our sentiments concerning useful and harmful objects (II.ii.3.10–11; IV.2.1–4).¹⁴ Thus, Smith would agree with Pufendorf's previous remark that simply conferring some benefit is far from sufficient to 'win the hearts of others'.

The 'negative' character of justice that Smith highlights (TMS II.ii.1.9) results in a notable difference between the virtues of justice and beneficence. Since justice concerns *refraining* from acts that are properly resented it not only should be enforced but can be enforced successfully. On the contrary, beneficent acts – the proper objects of gratitude – require a benevolent motive. We think that Smith's point about enforceability accounts well for Pufendorf's struggles with the imperfect duties: Pufendorf is aware that these duties cannot be fulfilled without at least the appearance of the right kind of motive because the relevant, sociability-promoting effects are linked to genuine gratitude.

In section three, we will see what relevance one's concern for other people's moral judgement has with respect to acting virtuously and, in particular, to acting justly. What we want to emphasize here is how the passions of resentment and gratitude exemplify the weight individuals put on other people's attitudes towards them. Smith provides a rich description of the objects of resentment and gratitude in TMS II.iii.1. He begins by noting that mere pain associated with an object, like stumbling on a stone, can raise a passing resentment towards it. There are, however, many other conditions that an object must meet for the resentment to be complete. For instance, the object of resentment must be capable of feeling pain and pleasure so that it can be punished. The harm must also be caused intentionally and with a motive that the sufferer disapproves of. This enables the complete satisfaction of resentment and provides an additional cause for it.

Smith maintains that the chief cause of resentment and gratitude, in their full form, is the attitude displayed by the person causing the harm or benefit rather than the consequences of these actions themselves. Further, the ultimate object of recompense or revenge is to maintain or change the attitude in question:

What most of all charms us in our benefactor, is the concord between his sentiments and our own, with regard to what interests us so nearly as the worth of our own character, and the esteem that is due to us. We are delighted to find a person who values us as we value ourselves, and distinguishes us from the rest of mankind, with an attention not unlike that with which we distinguish ourselves. To maintain in him these agreeable and flattering sentiments, is one of the chief ends proposed by the returns we are disposed to make to him. (TMS II.iii.1.4)

Likewise, our resentment towards someone is triggered by his self-preference and ‘the little account which he seems to make of us.’ By punishing the wrongdoer, we attempt to make him sensible ‘that the person whom he injured did not deserve to be treated in that manner’. (TMS II.iii.1.5) Smith slides in the latter clause from the injured party’s sense of what is due to him into what a spectator feels is due to that person, but exactly the same considerations and aims are reflected in the spectators’ sympathetic passion. To put it simply, gratitude and resentment are responses to the esteem that others seem to have for us and involve a desire to strengthen that esteem — or give rise to it when it is lacking. Smith’s analysis of resentment also clarifies why he thinks that a just person must abstain from much more than causing bodily or material harm to others. For instance, a serious lack in the virtue of chastity or veracity can be a proper cause of resentment and hence an instance of injustice (VII.iv.18–22).

For Pufendorf and Smith, awareness of being esteemed by others is a basic emotional need that displays itself in natural reactive attitudes. Pufendorf claims that people are often more enraged at each other because of insults than due to physical harm or material losses. Smith goes further in maintaining that even in cases like receiving a material advantage or suffering bodily harm gratitude and resentment are mainly responsive to the esteem or lack of it implied by the other’s act. According to both thinkers then, desire for esteem can be a stronger motive than the concerns of self-preservation. Smith’s depiction of gratitude interestingly implies that the pleasure of being esteemed by others is tied to self-approval. We come back to this notion in the last section, but turn first to consider the beneficial effects of esteem-seeking in Pufendorf.

2. Pufendorf on the desire for intensive esteem and sociability

We have shown how Pufendorf's account of resentment and gratitude reveals his awareness of how our affective attitudes toward the behaviour of others operate and how their attitudes move our passions in turn. Next, we seek to demonstrate how the desire for esteem motivates people to act in accordance with the natural law of sociability. What interests us is Pufendorf's social and psychological remarks on how the norms of sociability guide actions in social life. This is not to deny that he has a theory of how individuals are capable of being internally obligated by natural law.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Pufendorf acknowledges that appropriate emotional reactions are a crucial factor in the fulfilment of the basic natural law edict of living sociably. The way to sociability in large-scale societies is not individuals rationally recognizing the divinely imposed natural norms but socially controlled and shaped passions. For instance, the condemnation of unsociable acts from childhood on develops through the process of education 'to the strength of natural passion' (JNG I.2.6). Habitual behaviour develops into virtues or vices, which have instrumental value insofar as they promote sociability (I.4.6).¹⁶

According to our interpretation, emotional responses to social experience, rather than an internal sense of obligation, are what in fact motivate actions in accord with natural law. The same point about effectiveness applies to natural benevolence: although Pufendorf does not regard all human actions as expressions of self-interest, he thinks that our concern for the wellbeing of others is very feeble and not sufficient for performing the benevolent actions demanded by natural law.¹⁷ It is the desire for esteem that forms the central component in Pufendorf's idea of social interaction as a device that modifies human motivations and actually makes sociability possible. In maintaining and elevating their

esteem, individuals come to internalize moral norms. Moral conduct is thus a socialized product of a particular society and desire for esteem plays an important part in this process.

According to Pufendorf, we not only strive to maintain our simple esteem but also seek to intensify our esteem compared to others. Like many of his contemporaries, he notes that performing a deed that elevates the agent's esteem is accompanied by joy. The human being is an animal 'conceited about his own excellence and finds the greatest pleasure if he can discover in himself such things as will enable him to distinguish himself above others, and to boast' (JNG I.2.7/LNNO 31). For example, parents' concern about the success of their children is not principally due to the natural affection towards their offspring, but arises 'because they think that it constitutes glory for them to have brought them into the world'. As we have already seen, the joy arising from the desire for esteem may override one's inclination to self-preservation. For instance, the Japanese commit ceremonial suicide because of 'the boasting of friendship and love, and the glory derived from it'. (II.3.14/206) Besides joy and sadness, desire for esteem is manifest in bodily reactions. Pufendorf notes that things lowering our esteem in the eyes of others cause involuntary blushing, 'not, indeed, in the sight of man in general, but of those, whose esteem we especially desire' (I.2.7/32).

The claim that we naturally strive for the possession of higher esteem than others was, of course, familiar to Pufendorf through the writings of Thomas Hobbes, who links the question of the desire for esteem in social life to the pursuit of 'glory', the joy of superiority.¹⁸ Following Hobbes, Pufendorf acknowledges that self-loving individuals do not predominantly intermingle with others in order to seek friendship for its own sake but honour and utility (JNG II.3.18; VII.1.2). While animals cannot compare themselves to others, between human beings there is 'a struggle for honour and dignity', which is the root cause for 'the envy, rivalry and hatred' amongst individuals (VII.2.4/LNNO 969). Pufendorf, like Hobbes, worries that excessive desire for esteem threatens the stability of political associations and eventually leads to social conflict and a state of war. Institutional control of people's civil esteem by the sovereign is therefore necessary for the maintenance of sociability.

However, Pufendorf does not treat the desire for esteem merely as a further cause of antisocial conduct but maintains that it forms one the central motivational underpinnings of the development of sociability. He introduces the concept of intensive

esteem (*existimatio intensiva*), differing from 'simple esteem', as a further measure to differentiate the value of persons who are equal with respect to their simple esteem or civil esteem. Pufendorf conceives of honour as a kind of social recognition of a person's intensive esteem. Honour that 'corresponds to various degrees of esteem' arises from the imposition of other people. It is 'an expression of our judgement of another man's excellence'. (JNG VIII.4.11/LNNO 1241) Pufendorf explicitly comments on Hobbes's discussion of honour, accepting the Hobbesian notion that 'glory and honour consist of comparison and pre-eminence' (JNG VIII.4.11/LNNO 1241). Pufendorf admits that 'the foundations of honour may justly be reduced to power, in so far as they naturally produce some effect in human life' (VIII.4.13/1246). Nonetheless, he is reluctant to accept Hobbes's statement in chapter 10 of *Leviathan* that honour consists only in the esteem of power.¹⁹ By this definition, Pufendorf claims, Hobbes reduces 'all the foundations of honour or intensive esteem to power which is defined as the possession of present means to obtain in all likelihood some good' (VIII.4.13/1245).

Why does Pufendorf want to distinguish his definition of honour from Hobbes's? Whereas Hobbes has no problem basing practices of honour on fear, Pufendorf claims that fear provoked by power is not an expression of voluntary honour. Though external practices of honour in civil societies may result from political coercion, Pufendorf argues, 'the respect which is forced from a man by the power of sovereignty, is a sign not of any real honour for him, but a fear of death.' Accordingly, 'the mere external signs of honour unless they arise from the submission of the mind are empty things'. (JNG VIII.4.14/LNNO 1249) An individual grants honour because he recognizes some 'outstanding excellence in another and voluntarily submits to him for that reason' (VIII.4.14/1248).

Pufendorf thus distinguishes between power, which 'signifies the power to injure others' and excellence that deserves 'to attract true veneration'. Whereas the latter involves 'certain affection', the former is associated with hatred. (JNG VIII.4.18/LNNO 1253) By differentiating the external practices of honour from the foundations of intensive esteem, Pufendorf is able to maintain that the competition for intensive esteem and honour is not just a potential source of social conflict. Individuals should seek intensive esteem and corresponding honour by deeds 'agreeable with reason, and looking to the good of human society, and as it opens the way to the performance of such' (II.4.9/242).

We claim that the distinction between the external practices of honour commanded by civil laws and honour based on a person's intensive esteem plays a profoundly important role in Pufendorf's theory of sociability. The noteworthy difference from Hobbes is that Pufendorf's theory leaves more room for the sphere of intensive esteem independent of the will of the sovereign (JNG VIII.4.24). However, there is extensive textual evidence suggesting that Pufendorf thinks that the uneducated majority of humankind is incapable of measuring the esteem of others according to the decrees of natural law. Only a few individuals 'are blessed with the kind of natural disposition that enables them to perceive on their own what is permanently advantageous to humankind and individuals'. In practice, most people judge others based on spontaneous, self-regarding responses, rather than rationally imposed moral assessments. (VII.1.10/PWSP 208)

Pufendorf holds that social interaction is a more realistic remedy for the negative consequences of the excessive desire for esteem than individual rationality. While the multitude is not always able to accurately measure the moral esteem of other people, all individuals who naturally desire intensive esteem in society are motivated to behave sociably towards others. Although an individual's esteem may be raised because of some natural capacity, such as cleverness of the mind, his esteem is heightened 'most of all by worthy accomplishments' (JNG VIII.4.12/LNNO 1243). Actions in conformity with moral laws 'tend to maintain and increase a man's honour, esteem, and dignity' and increase his happiness (II.3.10). Indeed, the duties of humanity 'are the fittest material for winning a reputation if duly governed by magnanimity and good sense' (OHC I.8.5/DMC 65). It is clear evidence of man's social nature that 'every good man takes the greatest delight in distinguishing himself among his fellows by worthy deeds' (JNG II.3.15/LNNO 209). These remarks display that interaction between esteem seekers is not necessarily a threat to Pufendorfian sociability but that it generates sociable conduct and makes individuals capable of participating in social life.

3. Praise, blame, and moral motivation in Smith

One of the core elements in Pufendorf's theory is that though morality is instituted by God and can be demonstrated by reason, people internalize moral norms through interpersonal relations. The desire for esteem forms the central component in Pufendorf's idea of social interaction as a device that modifies human motivations and actually makes sociability possible. We think that Smith's views on what we will call 'moral motivation' bear a strong resemblance to Pufendorf's suggestion. By moral motivation, we mean the motives individuals have for attempting to comply with moral norms. Smith holds that our explicit efforts to avoid vice and strive for virtue stem from a group of related desires that all somehow refer to evaluations made by others. Moral motivation is thus intricately connected with the desire for esteem. While Pufendorf recognizes, for instance, that people want esteem especially from those whose judgement they value, his psychological theory lacks the resources to do justice to the variety of desires connected to esteem. By distinguishing between the viewpoints of agents and spectators, combined with complex patterns of the imagination, Smith is able to construct a much more nuanced account. This attentiveness to the imaginative capacities sets Smith's understanding of human nature apart from Pufendorf's.

Before moving on to the psychology of moral motivation, it is important to discuss the relationship between moral motivation and virtuous action. Moral motivation in our sense of the term can be contrasted with natural emotions that do not require awareness of moral norms or ideals.²⁰ According to Smith, specific natural emotions are necessary for various virtuous acts. For instance, with the virtue of beneficence the act must be motivated by love (TMS III.5.1). Moral motivation can help one cultivate one's natural affections and avoid blameable neglect, but it cannot be the motive of a beneficent act. The negative virtue of justice, however, allows moral motivation to play a more direct role.

Like Pufendorf, Smith holds that there is no natural passion, such as universal benevolence, that would stop us from hurting a stranger when our own interest is at stake (TMS III.3.4).²¹ Instead, he relies on moral motivation to account for the fact that people can abstain from unjust acts even in the absence of positive legislation. By grounding all moral worth in spectatorial judgements, Smith avoids the tensions that Pufendorf encounters in his attempts to combine the demands of natural law with an accurate understanding of evaluative attitudes. For Smith, feigning kind affections does not amount to virtuous beneficence, but

he finds a legitimate place for esteem-related motives in just acts and in the cultivation of one's character.

The moral motives that allow people to abstain from blameworthy acts and cultivate virtue are all connected to self-directed moral sentiments, that is, to pride and shame over one's mental characteristics and conduct. Smith maintains that thinking highly of oneself is agreeable and thinking meanly of oneself is disagreeable to an even greater extent. The thought of our own virtue is not only a source of tranquillity but elevates one 'with secret triumph of mind'. Correspondingly, the thought of our vice torments and casts us down. (TMS III.1.7; IV.2.12; VI.iii.22) In fact, the complex emotion of remorse, involving shame, self-hatred, grief and fear, is 'the most dreadful' of all human sentiments (II.ii.2.3).²²

A person's evaluative sentiments about herself result from adopting the viewpoint that some other person has or could have towards her. Smith's psychological account of self-evaluation is thus based on the imaginative tendencies that underlie sympathy. In Smith's words, all self-evaluation must bear 'some secret reference, either to what are, or to what, upon a certain condition, would be, or to what, we imagine, ought to be the judgment of others' (TMS III.1.2). The interpersonal element is not just a result of our psychologies but a necessary feature of the phenomenology of pride or shame (IV.2.12). Pufendorf's emphasis on interpersonal comparisons is likewise built into the social nature of pride and shame as Smith conceives it. For example, receiving praise requires displaying exceptionally good qualities because people praise others for uncommon and hence surprising degrees of propriety (I.i.5.6–10).

By relying on human nature's imaginative tendencies, Smith is able to further develop Pufendorf's scattered remarks about what kind of esteem and whose esteem we particularly long for. Accordingly, Smith makes a distinction between three related desires (TMS III.2; VII.ii.4.8–10) that correspond to three different means of maintaining pleasant self-approval.²³ First, there is vanity: the desire for praise and aversion to blame without qualifications. Lastly, at the other end of the spectrum, there is desire for praise-worthiness and aversion to blame-worthiness, which result from the workings of conscience. Smith further characterizes these latter as

... desire of possessing those qualities, and performing those actions, which we love and admire in other people; and in the dread of possessing those qualities, and performing those actions, which we hate and despise in other people.
(TMS III.2.32)

The curious notion of what ‘ought to be the judgment of others’ in TMS III.1.2 is explained here in naturalistic terms as referring to the agent’s own sentiments when imagining herself in an impartial position or to her awareness of previous sentiments when evaluating others from such a position. A person adopting this viewpoint of a fictional, uninvolved spectator is exercising her conscience (TMS III.2.32, III.3.1).

Smith proposes that people who strive to act according to some moral norm are often driven by a third, intermediate motive: the desire for merited praise and aversion to merited blame (TMS III.2.8; VII.ii.4.8–10). This motive is a sort of mixture of the two other desires (III.2.26, 28–29). Smith’s core idea is that someone else’s opinion delights or mortifies the agent just insofar as she comes to share the attitude in question. Hence, since one’s own spectatorial judgements are apt to influence imaginative self-examination and taking the viewpoint of actual others happens readily as well, the desire for merited praise is a common motive.

All of the above motives – more particularly, the fear of being resented, the fear of merited resentment, and the fear of meriting resentment – can make one abstain from an unjust act no matter how limited we suppose benevolence to be (TMS III.3.4). None of the three motives raises resentment in spectators and only the first one implies some moral deficiency or folly (III.2.4). In fact, Smith claims, the three approval-seeking desires match perfectly with the morally charged everyday notions of vanity, desire for true glory, and love of virtue. Only ‘splenetic philosophers’ such as Mandeville lump all these together under vanity. (III.2.8, III.2.25–27, VII.ii.4.8–10)

When looking for the disposition that *guarantees* a lifelong abstinence from injustice, aversion to blameworthiness is Smith’s preferred candidate: a concern for the true value of one’s own character (TMS III.3.4) – by one’s spectatorial standards that is – is needed to refrain from injustice in all circumstances. In discussing the necessity of justice for society in a Pufendorffian spirit, Smith argues explicitly that mere desire for praise would

urge people to fake virtue and hide vice without making them actually ‘fit for society’. What can make them truly fit is the desire for praise-worthiness and aversion to blame-worthiness, which are equally manifest in our human nature. (III.2.6–7)²⁴

However, Smith maintains that even given aversion to blame-worthiness people are liable to commit an injustice because of momentary lack of or an error in moral judgement. He states that in moments of temptation we are not likely to take an impartial perspective. Even if one tries, one is likely to imagine that a spectator would approve of taking what one wants as perfectly just. Further, in retrospect, one is prone to make distorted judgements and come up with justifying considerations in order to avoid the pains of self-disapprobation. (TMS III.4.3–6, 12) In order to counter the effects of this self-deception, our fear of blame-worthiness must take the form of rule-adherence known as a sense of duty.

Smith explains that resentment of others’ unjust acts and aversion to performing the like as well as received blame and regret for one’s own past injustices may result in a standing disposition to refrain from certain acts without deliberation (TMS III.4.7). This ‘sacred regard’ for rules of justice, can prevail even when one’s conscience is silenced or distorted by a present passion. Without it, ‘there is no man whose conduct can be much depended upon’ for it is the ‘habitual reverence’ for rules that prevents passing inclinations from breaking into action. (III.5.2) Whereas it might be impossible to learn to maintain a spectator’s perspective on all occasions (III.3.25), some standing regard for the rules of justice can be found in anyone whose education has not been ‘very singular’ (III.4.12). Far from suggesting that we can always rely on the voice of our conscience, Smith agrees with Pufendorf about the practical irreplaceability of habituation.²⁵

Despite the help gained from rule adherence, we think that Smith’s grim view about the pervasiveness of self-deception suggests that desire for and aversion to actual praise and blame might be in practice indispensable for avoiding vice and encouraging self-improvement. If complete self-contentment could always be maintained by following one’s conscience, the possibility of going seriously astray would be much greater given our propensity for self-deception. This idea is suggested in Smith’s discussion of a wrong sense of duty (TMS III.6.12–13) and in his comparison between excessive pride and vanity (VI.iii.22–53). It is arguably highly conducive to morality that most of us stand in need of

actual approval from others due to the irresistible workings of imagination and the resulting sympathies (III.2.28–31).

Conclusion

Pufendorf and Smith have surprisingly similar understandings of human psychology and there are striking parallels in the way that they link it to moral conduct. Both hold that being esteemed by others is a basic emotional need, as the emotions of resentment and gratitude exemplify. Further, the logic of the reactive attitudes informs their respective accounts of justice and beneficence. While Pufendorf and Smith ground the relevant norms differently, allowing for and fostering people's self-esteem constitutes their main content. Smith alone holds that moral norms arise from passionate human responses, but Pufendorf is no less attentive to the natural patterns of evaluating others. Indeed, we suggest that Pufendorf could have formulated a sentimentalist theory of morality by combining his Smithian moral psychology with his theory of socially imposed moral entities.

According to Pufendorf, the moral value of actions hinges on the divinely imposed duty to cultivate sociability. Nevertheless, he denies that postlapsarian people can be relied to respond to the divinely imposed law through their reason. A similar worry presents itself for Smith who sees that explaining how people come to judge others in uniform ways does not yet explain how people might be motivated to follow the resulting norms themselves. In their answers to these worries, both thinkers rely on the desire for esteem. Pufendorf argues that in seeking voluntarily imposed esteem, individuals end up behaving sociably in their efforts to gain the genuine approval of others. Smith presents a more complex view of esteem-related motivations that relies on the workings of the imagination. Moral motivation might be grounded in the pleasures and pains of pride and shame, but it need not be equated with vanity.

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Notes

¹ Pufendorf's works on natural law were a staple of law and philosophy curricula in many British and Scottish universities for half a century. See Saunders and Hunter 2003. On the influence of Pufendorf's natural jurisprudence in Scotland, see Haakonssen 1996, 58–62; Moore 2006, 291–316.

² The main exception is Saastamoinen 1995, 149–158. Heath 2013 is especially helpful about the desire for esteem in Smith. Daniel Luban (2012) argues that both the 'real interest' in *Wealth of Nations* and the 'love of domination' in *Lectures of Jurisprudence* are historically contingent manifestations of the desire for esteem. Luban claims that since Smith takes desire for esteem to be the dominant human motive, he comes closer to thinkers like La Rochefoucauld, Mandeville, and Rousseau than to a Pufendorffian line of thought. While we

find Luban's reading of Smith convincing we wish to challenge the reading of Pufendorf that is used as the contrast.

³ References to these works will be made according to the abbreviations in the Bibliography and Abbreviations and are specified by book, chapter and section. The original language version of the text is cited first, separated by a forward-slash from the translation. Our policy has been to rely on Michael Seidler's translation of *De jure* whenever possible and use the Oldfathers' translation only in passages omitted by Seidler.

⁴ The references use the textual divisions employed in the Glasgow edition by Raphael & Macfie.

⁵ Strawson argues in his classic 1974 essay that the concept of moral responsibility is rooted in reactive attitudes, that is, in natural responses towards the good and ill will manifested by others.

⁶ Pufendorf uses the concept of *existimatio* to refer to comparative moral quantities among people. Unlike Hobbes, who defines the value of persons as 'price' (*Leviathan* 10), Pufendorf differentiates the value of persons termed 'esteem' (*existimatio*) from the value (*valor*) of things, which he calls 'price' (*pretium*). Esteem is 'the value of persons in communal life according to which they can be equated or compared with others, and ranked before or after them' (JNG VIII.4.1/PWSP 253).

⁷ Pufendorf notes that simple esteem may be damaged or even entirely lost by various unsociable deeds. For instance, pirates and highway robbers lose their esteem entirely (JNG VIII.4.5).

⁸ Our reading of Pufendorf's concept of esteem is thus in line with Haakonssen's interpretation (2010, 7–9). This view differs considerably from the kind of proto-Kantian interpretations that conceive simple esteem as a right that *grounds* moral duties. See Hruschka 2000, 191–193.

⁹ Our reading differs from that of Schneewind (1996, 60), who argues that, for Pufendorf, the duties of humanity must be done 'from an appropriate loving motive'.

¹⁰ According to Pufendorf, from the fact that people 'appreciate benefits rendered to them, and should be grateful for the same' we should not conclude that they have moral dispositions innately and independently of the commands of natural law (JNG I.2.6/LNNO 31).

¹¹ By sympathy, or fellow feeling, Smith means having an analogous emotion with someone due to imagining oneself into that person's situation (TMS I.i.1.4). The imaginative switch of perspective that may result in fellow feeling is something that we do by a natural instinct (I.i.4.8).

¹² According to Smith, any particular emotion is approved of as proper with respect to its cause when one sympathizes or 'goes along' with that emotion (TMS I.i.3.1). Judgements of propriety form the basis of further moral evaluations as Smith's analysis of merit and demerit exemplifies.

¹³ The main effect of placing the criteria of proper punishment in vicarious resentment results from the fact that a spectator's resentment on behalf of a victim is typically less violent than it would be if she herself had been harmed and prompts to a less severe punishment. A society

that enforces natural justice through positive law gives vent to this more moderate resentment. (TMS II.iii.2.4)

¹⁴ Smith finds this difference in identifying the relevant reactions as the main difference between himself and Hume when it comes to accounting for moral thought (TMS VII.iii.3.17).

¹⁵ For analyses of Pufendorf's theory of moral obligation from the perspective of moral psychology, see Pink 2009 and Johns 2012. How the internal sense of moral obligation and emotional responses to social experience are related to one another as motivational sources is outside the scope of this paper.

¹⁶ For the constructive role of passions as a source of motivation for the promotion of sociability, see Haara 2016.

¹⁷ Pufendorf does not hold a philosophical position known as psychological egoism. In some instances, a person may be motivated to act by generosity or pity for another's condition. (JNG III.3.15). See also JNG II.3.14/PWP 151 where Pufendorf notes that, when reflecting man's natural condition, he has prioritized self-love, 'because man, being naturally aware of his own existence before that of others, naturally loves himself before he cares for them'.

¹⁸ For Hobbes's concept of glory, see especially Slomp 2000.

¹⁹ According to Hobbes, 'THE POWER of a man, to take it universally, is his present means to obtain some future apparent good' (Hobbes 2012, 132). Note that, in this context, by power (*potentia*) Pufendorf means natural power, not moral power (*potestas*).

²⁰ Haakonssen (2003, 211–213) claims that virtuous motives – and in fact all properly human action – is 'artificial' according to Smith in the sense that one does not count as a moral agent without having a spectator's perspective towards oneself, acquired through social interaction. We agree that people regularly condition their passions through spontaneously imagining how they and their situation would appear to others. Hence, action often results from a mixture of natural passion regulated imperceptibly by passions of others, their moral sentiments included. (TMS I.i.4.8–9; III.3.23) In this paper, we define moral motivation more narrowly and do not deny that natural passions might be socially conditioned.

²¹ Smith disagrees here with his teacher Francis Hutcheson, who maintains that natural benevolence is strong enough if it is not counteracted by mistaken views of interest (*Inquiry*, 179).

²² Smith repeatedly highlights the importance of pride and shame in determining human happiness. See also TMS I.iii.2.12 and II.ii.2.4.

²³ While Smith insists that all three desires are distinct, he acknowledges that they are 'connected, and often blended with one another' and that there is an 'affinity' between them (TMS III.2.2, 26). Our suggestion is that the affinity is that they all display the human need to sustain pride and avoid shame.

²⁴ Our discussion is limited to the ways that praise-related desires make people strive for virtue. Smith, like Pufendorf, does recognize that they lead to various other endeavours as well. For example, Smith argues that desire for approbation leads us to pursue wealth and status and is manifest in the pride we take in them (TMS I.iii.2).

²⁵ Smith points out that without a sense of duty we would constantly violate all sorts of moral norms that we approve of in our ‘cool hours’, ranging from mere politeness to justice. In connection with the rules of justice, then, a sense of duty becomes necessary for the ‘very existence of society’ (TMS III.5.2).